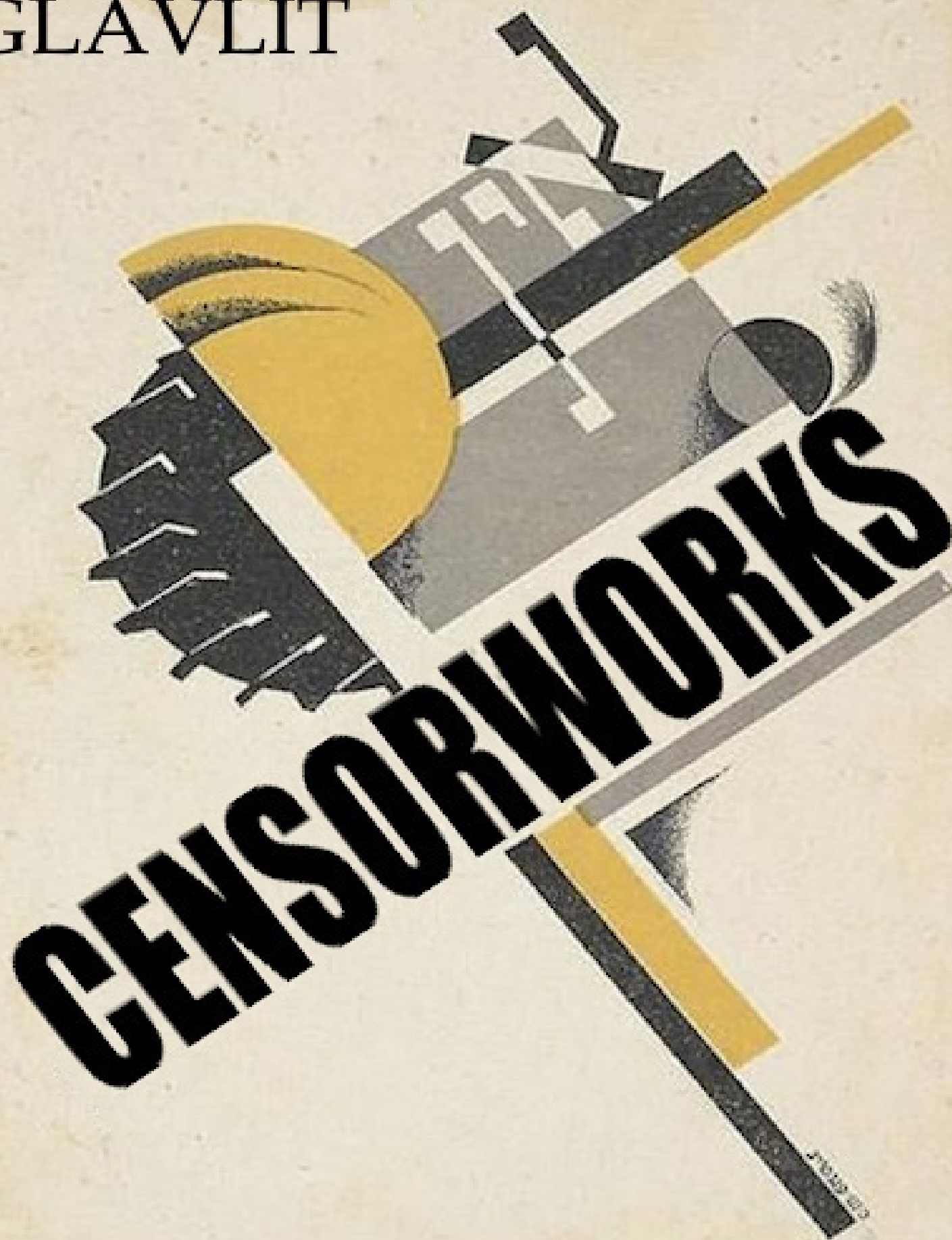


GLAVLIT



classics

Leonid Vladimirov

GLAVLIT

CENSORWORKS

classics

Leonid Vladimirov

С С



С Р

**ГЛАВНОЕ УПРАВЛЕНИЕ
ПО ОХРАНЕ ВОЕННЫХ
И ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ
ТАЙН В ПЕЧАТИ**

при Совете Министров СССР

„_____“ _____ 1960 г.

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Москва, Ж-74, Китайский пр., 7
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Glavlit:

HOW THE SOVIET CENSOR WORKS

Leonid Vladimirov



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GLAVLIT: HOW THE SOVIET CENSOR WORKS

History

A decree imposing temporary restrictions on the freedom of the press was signed by Lenin in 1918. The decree specifically indicated that censorship was to last for the duration of the Civil War and was to be rescinded immediately the war ended. In 1920, however, when the Old Bolshevik Myasnikov reminded Lenin of this promise, he received the brusque and indignant reply, reiterated to this day in Soviet propaganda, that freedom is a class concept and that the Bolsheviks were not about to grant unrestricted freedom to "monarchists and anarchists" — for, as Lenin acknowledged, this would lead to the Bolsheviks losing power. The last part, however, is omitted from modern propaganda.

The main organ of censorship in the entire half-century has been and remains "GLAVLIT." The precise origin of this title has long since been forgotten. Glavilit, one of those once fashionable composite words made up of the first syllables in an organization's name, has usually been deciphered as the "Central Board for Literature and Press Affairs." Presently, however, the same organization is officially entitled the "Central Board for the Safeguarding of State Secrets in the Press." Under the "Committee for Press Affairs of the USSR Council of Ministers." However, censorship is not subordinated to the Committee for Press Affairs in any way. This committee itself was conceived and for some reason institutionalized by A.I. Adzhubey, Khrushchev's son-in-law, when he was at the height of his career. From the first, the tasks of this committee were so vaguely defined in 1964 that the Chief of the USSR GLAVLIT, P.D. Romanov, was appointed as its head, and it did indeed appear that it was to function as a kind of legalized censorship committee.

This *error* of course was quickly *corrected* and it was stipulated that the Committee was to concern itself with only the press in general and was not to intrude in censorship matters. But by a kind of atavistic survival this *error* was perpetuated in a purely nominal bureaucratic form, so that

censorship is still supposed to come under the Committee for Press Affairs, which has the designation of a *Central Board*.

It is curious to note that, despite the new title of the censorship, its old title, Glavlit, continues to have a semi-official existence. Outside the building of the Ministry of Electric Power, of which Glavlit occupies the sixth story of a Moscow office building on Kitaysky proyezd, the sign reads "Central Board for the Safeguarding of State Secrets in the Press Under the Committee for Press Affairs of the USSR Council of Ministers," But up on the landing on the sixth floor the wall is embellished with a dignified glazed plate saying GLAVLIT USSR. Censors to this day are officially entitled "Glavlit representatives," censorship branches in cities and regions are called *Obllits* or *Gorlits* and include the stamp of the Military Censor.

*see below, which is placed on every document passing through his hands, refers to the *Glavlit organs*.

Structure and Organization

Glavlit is a vast All-Union organization with its headquarters in Moscow. It is directly subordinated to the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the CPSU Central Committee which in turn is subordinate to the CPSU Central Committee Secretary for Ideological Questions, Petr Nikolayevich Demichev. By some devious route, also perhaps an atavistic survival, Glavlit can receive its orders directly, i.e. not via Demichev, but from the CPSU Central Committee Secretary Suslov. It is possible to 'take complaints' against the activities of Glavlit to these men — but this is an extreme step, resorted to by individual editors only in the most rare and exceptional cases. One man who disputed most often with Glavlit at Central Committee level, usually appealing to Demichev, was the former editor-in-chief of *Novy mir*, A. Tvardovsky.

Each oblast has a Glavlit Board; also applicable to local districts, autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts and those Union Republics not subdivided into oblasts. The main cities of oblasts and other regional centers have their own permanent local sections of the Oblit, their size depending on the state of development of the press and publishing business in any given location. Union Republics subdivided into regions or districts (apart from the Russian Republic) also have republican "Central Boards for the Safeguarding of State Secrets." etc., but these organs are purely nominal, few in number and serve only as transmission points between the really effective USSR GLAVLIT and the really effective regional or district boards. The Russian Republic never set up its own Glavlit, not even when its own Central Committee Bureau and the Russian Republic's Union of Writers were constituted.

In addition to these various boards all central, regional and district newspapers, the majority of city newspapers and important publishing houses, as well as all major printing works have their own pool of permanent or visiting censors. Of the journals, only the largest weeklies enjoy the 'privilege' of having their own pool of censors, though even

‘Ogonyok’, since 1965, for instance, has been ‘read’ (the Glavlit professional euphemism for ‘censored’) by a joint Glavlit pool shared by all journals put out by the Pravda press located on Bumazhny proyezd.

Other journals are assigned to censors *servicing* the larger publishing houses. All central literary and art journals, for instance, are read by censors from *Goslitizdat*, the State Literary Publishing House, and all central popular science journals by the pool of censors from the Nauka Publishing House, etc. In the regions these departmental pools of censors are subordinated to the *Obllits* and *Kraylits*.

Provincial newspapers, as a rule, are read by provincial representatives of the Obllits, who are always housed for convenience, either in the editorial offices of the newspapers, or in their immediate vicinity — for a newspaper is the most labor consuming object in the life of a Glavlit representative and all the rest i.e. the output of a local small printing house or lithographers’ can be dealt with on the side.

- Abbreviations for ‘Regional’ and ‘City’ Boards for Literature and Press Affairs.
- A popular illustrated weekly magazine.

In the event of the sudden illness of a provincial censor, the editor of the local newspaper immediately informs the Provincial Party Committee and the Obllit. On the same day, if possible, the Obllit sends in a replacement (it may be a daily paper and it is absolutely out of the question for a single edition of the newspaper to appear without being censored), or it asks the Second Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee to step in and act as censor. The Second Secretary is singled out, since only he has been given special instructions on how to perform a censor’s functions. He does not, however, have a right to open up the fireproof safe or drawer of the incumbent censor or make use of his personal stamp. During the absence of a provincial censor a printing house has the right to print texts passed bearing only the signature of the Second Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee and without the personal stamp of the censor (see below). To do this, the director of the printing house has to seek the written authorization of the First Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee or the head of the

Obllit or Kraylit. In extreme cases (natural disasters, breakdown in the postal services, etc.), authorization can be given to the director of a printing house by telephone.

The USSR GLAVLIT has the right to override the censor of any particular organ and temporarily or permanently assume control. Usually this is done when the newspaper or journal has 'permitted political errors' and the censorship control over it needs reinforcing. This happened twice at the journal Znanie-sila (Knowledge is Strength) where I worked. The first time Glavit 'took it over' was in December 1959 for three months, after the editors had passed for the proof edition an article by S. Altshuller entitled "If the Visionaries Do Not Play a March." This article was not published because, on the insistence of the censor, the already printed copies were 'shredded' and the edition had to be reset. In the following three months the journal had to be read in the USSR GLAVLIT itself until it was again *returned* to the pool of censors at the Nauka Publishing House. The second time this happened was in 1965, after the publication of a story by Clifford Saymak "The Generation Which Reached Its Goals." This story was published but it caused anger at the Central Committee Agitprop. Up to June 1966 the journal Znanie was still under the control of the USSR GLAVLIT.

Glavlit and Other Forms of Censorship

Apart from Glavlit, several other 'specialized' central censorship services operate in Moscow which do not exist even in Union Republics, not to mention in the regions and districts. Officially materials originating outside Moscow and needing the attention of some specialized censorship have to be sent to Moscow. In fact the local Glavlit organs simply send on the material in question.

The largest of the special services is the MiliStaff of the USSR Armed Forces, Litsa Frunze, also at No 19.

Strictly speaking the press organs send items to the Military Censor only in those instances where Glavlit demands a decision of the Military Censor over military questions contained in a given text, but rules are one thing and editorial work in practice is another. In fact, each editorial board knows full well in advance what material will be 'diverted' by Glavlit to the Military Censorship. And so it sends it straight there from the first.

The Military Censorship works efficiently, and, however strange it may seem, extremely liberally. However, its stamp of authorization does not yet signify permission for publication. Given here is the full text of this large rectangular stamp, which, after being placed on the first page of the manuscript has to be filled in by censor's own hand:

The Military Censorship has no objections to the publication of materials of a military nature contained in _____ under the heading _____ on the Pages _____ See Page _____ for our remarks.

Final authorization for the possible publication of the given material should be obtained from the GLAVLIT organs.

Date _____
Military Censor _____ (signature)

One other special censorship institution, the atomic censorship, is housed in a building of the State Atomic Energy Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers, located on Staromonetny pereulok. In 1966 this Censorship office was headed by Valeriy Kalinin, who took over from Major-General Kandaritsky, who had committed suicide.

Permission of this censorship office is required for all material containing any mention of atomic energy, both in military and peaceful application. Even science fiction stories are turned down by Glavlit if they contain mention of atomic fission and do not bear Kalinin's stamp. Gaining personal access to this censorship for editors of press organs is made extremely difficult, for, in order to get there, one has to obtain a pass to enter the Atomic Energy Committee building. V. Kalinin himself has the right to approve a pass, but is extremely reticent about this, preferring to remain inaccessible, in order that he should be free of pressure to make him hurry or of attempts to influence him. The censor works extremely slowly — I know of cases where material was being 'checked' for five months. Even the editors of Pravda have sometimes had to complain to Suslov and Minister Petrosyants over the bureaucratic methods of the censors at the Atomic Energy Committee. The speed with which materials were processed increased a little after this, but, as far as I know, no one was punished.

Censors in the USSR are punished only for hasty and over-liberal processing; slow and quibbling work is commended.

Another specialized censorship office is the Commission for Research and Exploitation of Cosmic Space under the USSR Academy of Sciences. This is no more than a specialized censorship group, very closely associated with Glavlit and working in the Academic Institutes Building on Vavilov Prospect, No 18. This office has been headed since its inception in 1957 by Candidate of Technical Sciences Mikhail Galaktionovich Kroshkin. Every book, article, radio or TV broadcast in any way connected with space flights must have an authorization from Kroshkin's censorship office. At the press conferences given after each flight by Soviet cosmonauts, Kroshkin sits behind them and 'corrects' their replies on the spot.

Other specialized censorship groups also exist, for radio electronics, chemistry, State Security. The last named is still known as the 'KGB Censorship'. If questions entering the domain of one of these specialized offices crop up in the text it must immediately be sent in to obtain the stamp of the appropriate censor, before the material is sent to Glavlit. This rule is only inapplicable in relation to the KGB censorship — materials are sent to them by the Glavlit censors where necessary, and the board of editors are informed at the same time.

Processing Texts

According to current instructions Glavlit does not examine material still in manuscript form, but only the printer's proofs. In practice, however, there are many exceptions to this rule. If, for example, an article should go to a specialized censorship office before being sent to Glavlit (the Military, Atomic or Space censor, for instance), a manuscript copy of the material is sent, while, in the meantime, a proof edition is quietly composed at the printing works. If one had to wait for a printer's proof before sending it in to the specialized censor the entire production process would be held up, even though the production schedule allows nine to eleven days for a monthly journal's censorship and subsequent correction.

It also happens that a manuscript version is sent directly to Glavlit as well. Experienced editors do this in those instances where they consider a particular manuscript *unsafe* from a censorship point of view. In such cases they usually telephone the censor and, in a friendly and apologetic tone, ask his permission to send him for *consultation* an item which has not yet been made up into proofs. This is a rather delicate psychological move, for even if the material is a little *tricky*, the censor will be inclined to pass it, since, he feels that he was asked in an open way for his advice and in good time. He thereupon makes one or two trivial corrections which the editors understandably will accept gratefully.

I have known instances when, after such a 'consultation', the censors have passed rather daring material and then afterwards themselves defended it before their superiors; in such circumstances they think of themselves as champions, if not of freedom, at least of fairness and even boast of their 'high principles' to the editors. By these and other methods the most human Glavlit workers soothe their consciences troubled with the 'censor's complex'.

If, however, one takes the normal process by which materials pass through Glavlit's hands, then the editorial board presents *its* censor with two copies

of the proofs — whether it be a newspaper, journal, book or children's calendar which consists only of pictures. The proof must accurately reflect what the coming edition will look like, even down to the layout. When Pasternak died, Literaturnaya Gazeta (The Literary Gazette,) was only permitted to give a one column obituary box on a 'Member of the Literary Fund', Pasternak, Boris Leonidovich. But the editors were clever enough to place next to it a three column article about some Czech or Bulgarian poet whose headline, 'A Very Great Poet', was read on the same line as Pasternak's name. The senior censor of Literaturnaya Gazeta received a severe reprimand for not checking the page layout.

In reading the proofs the censor notes dubious or inadmissible places. After reading it through he informs the editors, one of whom immediately appears to discuss anything which has arisen.

At this point something should be said about the editorial boards' official and unofficial representation. According to Glavlit's internal instructions (and the words 'according to our instructions' are constantly on the lips of censors) the printed publication should establish contact with Glavlit only via the editor-in- chief or his deputy, and in the case of newspapers also via the executive secretary. But in newspapers, journals and book publishing houses it is physically impossible to adhere to this instruction as it stands. Glavlit itself gives tacit approval to contacts made between censors at the level of desk chiefs, the executive secretary's deputy and, in publishing houses, sometimes at the level of rank-and-file, regular full-time editors.

But there is in addition one rule which, as far as I know, has never been violated. This is that under no circumstances may there be any direct contact between the censor and the author or any freelance contributor to any printed organ. Notes and corrections made by the censor should, where necessary, be communicated to the author as if they came from the editors. The rules of the game are such that the author is not even supposed to know that his work is censored. The words 'Glavlit' and 'censorship' are officially banned from editorial correspondence or official telephone conversations. The printing house belonging to our journal was located in another city, and when informing it about the latest corrections made by the censor, we had to speak and write about the resetting made necessary by *author's*

corrections, There are some cynical editorial boards which even now deduct from the author's fees expenses for *author's corrections*, though these in fact cover nothing more than expenses for resetting caused by the censor's demands.

And so the editorial representative meets with the censor. Together they examine all the points noted by the censor. Sometimes the censor simply wishes to learn the source of this or that report. In other cases he demands that some reference be struck out, since it comes under the 'Index', (see below). Finally, he may object to certain passages or entire articles for political reasons. I was quite astonished on being told in England that a journalist there is not obliged to disclose the source of his information, not even to the Good Lord himself.

I have never heard the words *for political reasons* pass the lips of a censor, just as I have never heard the precise reasons given for a text being withdrawn or reworked. The censor simply points to the place marked in red and says: 'That will not do, it must be removed' or 'There is a strange sense here, it should be changed or taken out entirely'.

I have tried at times to play the innocent and ask censors why they insist precisely on taking out particular texts. It is impossible to receive an exhaustive answer in such cases. The most friendly censor will give an answer to the effect that, "Well, what is there to explain? You understand well enough yourself," or 'read the text for yourself and see what kind of logic there is in it'. A less polite censor will simply say, 'No discussion!'

“Index of Information Not to be Published in the Open Press”

Working on the text, the censor is guided by the ‘Index of Information Not to be Published in the Open Press’, This thick tome, marked ‘SECRET’ on the cover, is also in the possession of chief editors of central newspapers and journals, where it is kept in a safe, together with other secret documents. The censors and editors in their conversations call this book almost officially the ‘Talmud’, It contains the following sections:

- General Information;
- Military Information;
- Industry and Construction;
- Agriculture;
- Transport;
- Economics and Finance.

At the end of the book is an alphabetical index, a great rarity in Soviet publications.

The first section is of special interest. From it we learn that without special government permission in every single instance it is forbidden to publish:

1. Information about earthquakes, avalanches, landslides and other natural disasters in the territory of the USSR;
2. Information about fires, explosions, aeroplane, naval and mine disasters, rail accidents; of course one may report to one’s heart's content about such occurrences outside the limits of the socialist camp;
3. Figures about the earnings of government and Party workers;
4. Any comparison between the budget of Soviet citizens and the prices of goods;
5. Information about price increases, even seasonal or local increases;
6. Reports about increased living standards anywhere outside the socialist camp;
7. Reports of food shortages in the USSR (it is possible only to speak about local ‘bottlenecks’ in the delivery of specific items;

8. Any kind of average statistics about the country as a whole not taken from the Central Statistical Bureau reports;
9. The names of any KGB operatives apart from the Committee Chairman;
10. The names of workers for the former Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, again, apart from the Chairman of the Committee;
11. Aerial photographs of Soviet cities and also precise geographic coordinates of any populated point on Soviet territory;
12. Mention of Glavlit organs and the jamming of foreign radio broadcasts;
13. Name of political figures on a special list, to which belong five of the eight Soviet 'prime ministers', so far: Rykov, Molotov, Malenkov, Bulganin and Khrushchev.

The industrial section of the 'Index' bans publication of any absolute figures on the number of workers and the productivity of enterprises (in reporting 'successes and achievements' one has to cleverly manipulate relative figures), forbids publication of accurate addresses of enterprises and of industrial sites in general, including the number of plants or even the numbers of their postal boxes.

Then come two lists of enterprises: those which one can mention in the press but without any detailed description of their operation, and those which cannot be mentioned in any context. The latter list is the longer.

The agricultural section places a ban on the publication of absolute figures about the harvest of any specific crop in specific regions of the USSR or in the country as a whole; it forbids specific reports about harvest failures, forbids comparisons — even indirect comparisons using percentages — of the harvest or total yield of the current year with that of previous years, if figures for the current year are only the same or lower. It is forbidden to write specifically about damage and losses caused by erosion, drought, dust storms, floods, cattle disease. One may not mention the number of tractors on any given farm if the size of its acreage is also given, and so on.

All these are, of course, only isolated examples. They can be extended indefinitely. It is forbidden to mention the existence in the country of 'hard

currency' or closed retail shops, government dachas or sanatoriums, the opening or closing of churches, the number of churchgoers, gold reserves or other valuable ores in the country, any figures describing the assets held by the Soviet State Bank, the number of crimes in any category for the country as a whole or for oblasts, districts, provinces or cities. The *Talmud* contains over 300 pages filled with rather small print.

Finally, working with the 'Index of Information Not To Be Published in the Open Press' is only one side of the activities of the censor. The Index makes no mention of the political evaluation of texts and I am not aware of any written guideline for censors on this subject. From long and regular contact with Glavlit workers, many of whom were my *friends*, I have reached the conclusion that Glavlit does not issue any such guidelines. Censors develop and perfect their political *sense* in their internal seminars, which, according to my observations, are held almost every day.

Technicalities

After the editorial board makes the required alterations in the text and gives the censor the information he requires about the sources used, the material is signed for printing. For this every printer's sheet (sixteen pages of text) or every newspaper double page has to bear the censor's personal stamp, which looks like this:

Permanent	Approved _____
Personal	Number _____ Date _____
Number of	Glavit Representative _____
Censor	_____ (signature)

On the top line, after the word 'Approved', the censor adds in his own hand, 'for printing'. Then he takes from his logbook the next available number and adds this, together with the date the stamp was given. This number will be reproduced in the publication data and can be seen on all Soviet publications except the special ones destined only for abroad. On the last line the censor adds his signature.

One proof copy approved in this way is released to the representative of the editorial board and a second, a true copy of the first, is held by Glavlit.

The printing house is now able to pass on the printer's proofs to the compositor upon receiving the text bearing the Glavlit stamp. For permitting any printing run-off made on the printing machine without the approval of Glavlit, the director of the printing works can receive up to eight years in prison. Having printed up an edition, the printing house makes up ten 'signal copies' and distributes them to fixed addresses — the CPSU Central Committee, the '*Book Palace*', the Lenin Library, and the Committee for Press Affairs. A postal distribution list together with a stamp

confirming dispatch is attached to the censor's 'signal copy', which the printers give to the editors and which the editors again present to the censors. At this stage the censor compares this copy with the proof copy he has retained and, satisfied that they are identical, he again places on it his personal stamp, but now, instead of 'for printing', he writes '*for the public*'. Having received this permission for publication the printer has the right to release the copies which have already been prepared and held in stock.

Glavlit also had a sophisticated structure, so that important publications, after approval for printing has been given, are also read by certain other highly-placed censors as well. If no snags occur here, the editors do not even get to know that the work has been read at this higher level. But not infrequently questions can arise entailing extra corrections. This applies most frequently to journals and books, which can be 'held' for resetting literally on the day before publication. Such changes are always extremely expensive, but 'Glavlit expenses' can usually be written off somewhere without trouble.

In daily newspapers the process of censorship is only compressed in time, but is in no way simpler, in exactly the same way the censor reads each number twice through, approving it first for printing and then for publication. The difference is that the executive secretary of the editorial board or his duty deputy, if he has business with the censor, does not go over to the censor to talk over problems and rework materials: having been informed over the telephone by the censor that particular items have been questioned, he at once rushes over to the Glavlit office with replacement material of the same length which has been held in reserve "in the sheep-pen," as journalists say. The text which has been pulled out is then sent back to the editorial department for reworking in conjunction with the editor and may appear in the next edition in a corrected version, or it may not appear at all.

It is futile to argue with the censor about material forbidden in the *Talmud* and virtually impossible over political matters. In the extreme case where an editor decides to complain about 'his' censor to the head office of Glavlit, he is told: 'The Glavlit organs do not have the right to demand the withdrawal of a text if it does not contain military or state secrets, We only

recommend that it be removed. If you wish to print it despite our recommendation, you take the responsibility upon yourself. We will issue our authorizing stamp and will pass on our point of view to the Central Committee.'

After such a 'liberal' answer, any editor would immediately back down. I know of only one case where an editor of a newspaper demanded a censorship stamp against the 'recommendation', He got his stamp and the newspaper came out the way he wanted it, but almost immediately afterwards the editor was dismissed.

The Censors

At the very smallest, probably underestimated, computation the Glavlit organs (not the special censorship which is quite small) employ around 70,000 people. The absolutely overwhelming majority of these have a completed higher education. Censors who do not have higher education are still to be found in some provincial offices, far from large cities, but gradually they are being replaced even there. In general in the last ten years there has been a radical 'rejuvenation' of the censorship personnel. All men who have reached the age of sixty, and women who have reached fifty-five, have been retired and in their place have been recruited people aged between twenty-five and thirty-five.

For many years the head of Glavlit was Pavel Dmitrievich Romanov, a former CPSU Central Committee Section Head. His first deputy was one Zorin (I cannot recall his first name). Another deputy was Nikolay Nikolayevich Glazatov. For a time, from approximately 1963 to 1966, another of Romanov's deputies was Ivan Ivanovich Agayants, who was suddenly appointed out of the blue to the position and very soon earned an unenviable reputation among editors. In 1966, however, it became known that Agayants had been 'returned' to the KGB, where he held the rank of general. He died in 1967.

I know that at the Central Glavlit office on Kitaysky proyezd there are some boards and departments, but it is difficult to say what they are called and what they do. On the Glavlit doors hang merely personal nameplates. One gets the impression that apart from a limited amount of direct censorship work, the Glavlit headquarters is mainly concerned with holding an endless stream of conferences, seminars, courses, and so on. Two or three times a year Glavlit invites editors to attend conferences.

Rank-and-file and senior censors who operate outside the headquarters as a rule are combined in groups of two or more. They are housed in editorial offices which bear only numbers and signs warning 'Unauthorized persons

not admitted'. These rooms are furnished with enormous safes and at night are personally sealed by the censors.

Censors are recruited purely from among Party and Komsomol members. Many of them come from the arts departments of the universities and colleges, where there is always a reservoir of students who regret the lack of opportunity to engage in political activities and accept censorship work as a substitute. Other sources of recruitment to the censorship apparatus include, inevitably, the KGB, whose workers are frequently directed to *reinforce* Glavlit. Then, former journalists and editors (generally the less capable ones) are often recommended for censorship work by the Party organizations of publishing houses and editorial boards at the request of Glavlit.

As in any section of society, the censors include all kinds of people, and the differences also extend to their loyalties. Certain censors who officially do everything required of them, unambiguously make it known that they are gnawed by conscience. Quite a few are willing to do everything to stress that they are honorable men with principles who are ready to insist on their decisions before anyone. Others, also suffering from the 'censor's complex', try to be as informal as possible in relations with editors and display their friendly disposition. Others again wish to appear as something like participants in the creative process, entering into discussions on the artistic merits of a text inviting editors to frank discussions as equals and repeating endlessly that in this respect they are not empowered to give any instructions, but are simply interested in an exchange of opinions. Possibly some are genuinely interested, but others are only sounding out the political tendency of the editors in such a discussion.

If a censor, especially a young one, forbids something which is clearly honest, human and just, then he may come right out and say to the editor sotto voce: 'I hope you understand that this ban does not come from me personally. I would give permission with pleasure, but even if I did it would just make trouble for you and me.' One of my colleagues, the deputy editor-in-chief of a large central newspaper, asked one censor who had made such a comment: 'So what are you doing in such a rotten job?' At which the censor uttered a deep sigh and said: "Yes, I'm quitting, I'm quitting!" He did

not report the talk he had had with the editor and soon he really did disappear somewhere.

Naturally there are also not a few mindless, harsh apparatchiks with whom it is very difficult to work. These are both men and women — perhaps more women than men. Complaining against such censors to the Glavlit chiefs usually means only that their position is strengthened, and that they are able to be even more savage to the ones who complain.

Conclusion

Although the picture I have drawn of the Soviet censorship rests principally on my experience of it during the 'fifties and early 'sixties, it is clear that its essential features have changed little since Stalin's day. Indeed, remarkably little has changed since the early 'thirties, when Stalin finally succeeded in institutionalizing and controlling every aspect of the communications and publishing media. Those changes that have actually come about over the years have usually been ones of emphasis and intensity and have barely touched the machinery I have described.

In more recent years, the trend has been towards a greater, rather than lesser, severity in matters of censorship, so that Solzhenitsyn, for instance, in 1967 made it the first object of attack in his famous Open Letter to the Fourth Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union. And so long as the political structure of the Soviet Union seems to require that the exchange of information and ideas be rigidly controlled and directed, there is little likelihood of Glavlit and its satellites being modified in any significant way.

Solzhenitsyn on Glavlit

Not having access to the platform at this Congress, I ask that the Congress discuss the following:

The no longer tolerable oppression, in the form of censorship, which our literature has endured for decades, and which the Union of Writers can no longer accept.

Under the obfuscating label of GLAVLIT, this censorship — which is not provided for in the Constitution and is therefore illegal, and which is nowhere publicly labeled as such — imposes a yoke on our literature and gives people unversed in literature arbitrary control over writers.

A survival of the Middle Ages, the censorship has managed, Methuselah-like, to drag out its existence almost to the twenty-first century. Of fleeting significance, it attempts to appropriate to itself the rôle of unfleeting time — of separating good books from bad.

Our writers are not supposed to have the right, are not endowed with the right, to express their cautionary judgments about the moral life of man and society, or to explain in their own way the social problems and historical experience that have been so deeply felt in our country. Works that might express the mature thinking of the people, that might have a timely and salutary influence on the realm of the spirit or on the development of a social conscience, are proscribed or distorted by censorship on the basis of considerations that are petty, egotistical, and — from the national point of view — shortsighted. Outstanding manuscripts by young authors, as yet entirely unknown, are nowadays rejected by editors solely on the ground that they ‘will not pass’. Many members of the Writers’ Union, and even many of the delegates at this Congress, know how they themselves have bowed to the pressures of the censorship and made concessions in the structure and concept of

their books — changing chapters, pages, paragraphs, or sentences, giving them innocuous titles — just for the sake of seeing them finally in print, even if it meant distorting them irremediably. It is an understood quality of literature that gifted works suffer disastrously from all these distortions, while untalented works are not affected by them.

Indeed, it is the best of our literature that is published in mutilated form.

Solzhenitsyn in his 'Open Letter to the Fourth Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union', 1967.

Terms

GLAVLIT: Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i izdatel'stv Narodnogo komisariata prosvesshcheniia [RSFSR].

GLAVLIT: The Main Administration for Literature and Publishing of the People's Commissariat for Education [RSFSR].

RSFSR: Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic.

Nauka: (Science) Nauka Publishing House.

Oblast: region

Goslitizdat: State Literary Publishing House.

About Leonid Vladimirov

Vladimirov was the department head at the Soviet equivalent of Popular Mechanics magazine, where he introduced his readers to the engineering primacy of Soviet science and technology. In 1966, he defected to Great Britain, and since writing was his primary skill, he began to introduce his new readers to the falsity of Soviet science and technology propaganda, in particular space exploration related to traveling to, and landing on, the moon.

End

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Author _____

Title _____

DATE.	
Sept 15/37	Col. D
Feb. 12/38	J. M. H.
JUL 23 1940	H. Robinson
Apr 18/44	Letter
March 16/45	S. M.

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